

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 0184

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

NOFORN

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PBOR CB VM CH KN
SUBJ: CHOU EN-LAI'S WIDOW VISITS CAMBODIA

REF: A) PEKING 92, B) STATE 10922

1. SUMMARY: NPC VICE CHAIRMAN TENG YING-CHAO'S SUDDEN TRIP TO CAMBODIA APPEARS TO BE AN EFFORT TO PLAY CONCILIATORY ROLE IN CAMBODIAN-VIETNAMESE BORDER CONFLICT, PERHAPS IN RESPONSE TO URGING BY VIETNAM'S VICE FOREIGN MINISTER PHAN HIEN. THIS EFFORT IS COMPATIBLE WITH RECENT STATEMENTS BY CHINESE OFFICIALS THAT PRC WILL NOT INTERVENE IN CONFLICT AND WITH HANDS-OFF APPROACH ADOPTED BY CHINESE MEDIA. WHILE PEKING DOES NOT WANT TO BE ASSOCIATED PUBLICLY WITH
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MEDIATION EFFORT, IT APPEARS TO HAVE DECIDED THAT ITS INTERESTS WILL BEST BE SERVED BY A QUICK END TO THE CONFLICT. END SUMMARY.

2. CHOU EN-LAI'S WIDOW TENG YING-CHAO, A VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS STANDING COMMITTEE, FLEW TO PHNOM PENH JAN 18. IN ADDITION TO ITS OBVIOUS

ROLE IN DEMONSTRATING CHINA'S CONTINUED FRIENDSHIP FOR CAMBODIA, THE TRIP APPEARS TO BE A HASTY EFFORT TO CONCILIATE THE KHMER BORDER CONFLICT WITH VIETNAM. THE VISIT, WHICH CAME AS A COMPLETE SURPRISE TO DIPLOMATS IN PEKING, IS APPARENTLY INTENDED TO BE A QUICK ONE. FRENCH EMBASSY OFFICIALS HERE HAVE BEEN ASSURED TENG WILL BE BACK IN PEKING IN TIME FOR A MEETING WITH PREMIER BARRE SCHEDULED FOR JANUARY 22. TENG WAS ACCOMPANIED BY VICE FOREIGN MINISTER HAN NIEN-LUNG, THE MFA'S ASIAN SPECIALIST, AND OTHER FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS.

3. AT FIRST BLUSH THE CHOICE OF MADAME CHOU FOR THIS TICKLISH TASK SEEMS ODD, SINCE SHE IS USUALLY GIVEN MORE CEREMONIAL ASSIGNMENTS. IT MAY BE, HOWEVER, THAT PEKING WISHED TO DRAW ON THE RESERVOIR OF CAMBODIAN GOODWILL FOR THE FORMER PREMIER, AND THUS CHOSE HIS WIDOW TO DELIVER THE CHINESE MESSAGE.

4. THE CONTENTS OF THE MESSAGE CAN PERHAPS BE INFERRED FROM THE STATEMENTS CHINESE OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN MAKING PRIVATELY TO FOREIGN DIPLOMATS AND GUESTS. THUS ON JANUARY 12 VICE PREMIER CHI TENG-KUEI IS REPORTED TO HAVE TOLD JAPANESE DIET MEMBER CHUJI KONO THAT "ALL TROOPS INVOLVED IN THE CONFLICT SHOULD RETURN TO THEIR TERRITORY PRIOR TO NEGOTIATION." THIS SAME THEME WAS REPEATED IN THE LAST FEW DAYS
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IN A CONVERSATION OF HAN NIEN-LUNG WITH THE FRG AMBASSADOR, IN A STATEMENT BY MFA DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR ASIAN AFFAIRS WANG HSIAO-YUN WITH A JAPANESE EMBOFF AND IN A CONVERSATION BETWEEN SRI LANKAN CHARGE AND WANG'S COLLEAGUE RESPONSIBLE FOR INDOCHINA AFFAIRS, LIANG FENG. BOTH WANG AND HAN ADDED THE COMMENT THAT CHINA WOULD NOT INTERVENE IN THE CONFLICT.

5. CHINA'S PUBLIC STANCE HAS PARALLALLED ITS RATHER EVEN-HANDED POSITION IN THESE PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS. THUS ALTHOUGH THE PRC PRESS HAVE DEVOTED SOMEWHAT MORE SPACE TO PRESENTING THE CAMBODIAN SIDE OF THE QUESTION, THEY HAVE SCRUPULOUSLY AVOIDED TAKING SIDES (REF A). THIS WAS SHOWN MOST RECENTLY ON THE JANUARY 17 TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE CAMBODIAN ARMY. WHILE PEKING PRESS ACKNOWLEDGED THE DATE FIRST WITH A CAMBODIAN POEM AND THEN TODAY WITH EXCERPTS FROM RADIO PHNOM PENH'S ANNIVERSARY EDITORIAL, CHINESE COMMENT HAS BEEN CONSPICUOUSLY LACKING. IN CONTRAST, NORTH KOREA'S NODONG SINMUN COMMEMORATED THE CAMBODIAN ANNIVERSARY IN AN ARTICLE WHICH REFERRED INDIRECTLY TO THE CAMBODIAN ARMY'S RECENT BATTLES AND STRESSED REVO-

LUTIONARY FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES' ARMIES.
PEOPLE'S DAILY PRINTED EXCERPTS FROM THIS
KOREAN ARTICLE, THUS DRAWING ATTENTION TO
ITS OWN LACK OF COMMENT. (NORTH KOREA HAS ALSO
ACKNOWLEDGED LETTERS FROM POL POT, KHIEU SAMPHAN AND
IENG SARY APPEALING FOR SUPPORT. ALTHOUGH SIMILAR
LETTERS WERE PRESUMABLY SENT TO THE PRC, THESE HAVE
NEVER BEEN ACKNOWLEDGED.)

6. THUS THE CHINESE, ALTHOUGH THEY CLEARLY SYMPATHIZE
WITH CAMBODIA IN ITS CONFLICT WITH ITS LARGER NEIGHBOR,
APPEAR TO HAVE DECIDED AGAINST ANY DIRECT INVOLVEMENT
IN THE DISPUTE, AND TO HAVE CONCLUDED THAT CHINA'S
INTERESTS WOULD BEST BE SERVED BY GETTING THE TWO
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COUNTRIES TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE AS SOON AS
POSSIBLE. TENG YING-CHAO'S CURRENT TRIP COULD HAVE
BEEN PROMPTED BY THE RECENT REPORTED INTENSIFICATION
OF THE BORDER FIGHTING AND MAY ALSO BE A RESPONSE TO
VIETNAMESE VICE FOREIGN MINISTER PHAN HIEN'S RECENT VISIT TO
PEKING (REF B) IN WHAT WAS PRESUMABLY AN EFFORT TO
SEEK PRC MEDIATION.

7. WE NEVERTHELESS EXPECT THAT CHINA WILL CONTINUE TO
DENY THAT IT HAS UNDERTAKEN ANY MEDIATING ROLE. SRI
LANKAN CHARGE, WHEN HE ASKED MFA OFFICIAL LIANG FENG ABOUT PROPOSAL
IN ALBANIA'S ZERI I POPULLIT THAT CHINA MEDIATE CONFLICT, DREW
AN ANGRY RESPONSE WHICH LEFT NO DOUBT THAT PEKING FINDS SUCH
PUBLIC PROPOSALS DISTASTEFUL.
WOODCOCK

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